INFORMING READERS OF THE PRESENCE OF DATA COMMON TO MULTIPLE INVESTIGATIONS

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Applied behavior analysts have shown increased interest in how behavioral assessment methods (e.g., functional analysis, reinforcer assessment) may be used to increase our understanding of and ability to treat aberrant behavior. For example, one of our patients, Carly, displayed destructive behavior (aggression, disruption) that was maintained by escape, attention, and access to tangible items. She participated in an investigation on the effectiveness of combining positive and negative reinforcement in the treatment of escape-maintained behavior (Piazza et al., 1997). She also participated under a different pseudonym, Carla, in an investigation that illustrated how a modified concurrent-chains procedure could be used to evaluate client preferences for different treatment packages (Hanley, Piazza, Fisher, Contrucci, & Maglieri, 1997). Her functional analysis data were included in each investigation, not because they were the central focus of either study, but because they provided the basis for selecting the particular intervention in each investigation. Unfortunately, we did not cite the first investigation (Piazza et al.) in the second one (Hanley et al.), nor did we inform the reader that the same functional analysis appeared in both articles. In retrospect, this was a mistake. There are other examples of this occurring in *JABA* and elsewhere, both in articles from our program and from others, but it does not seem necessary to cite all of them for the purposes of this commentary.

There are a number of reasons why authors should acknowledge overlapping data, even if it is incidental to the central focus of the article. First, it protects authors, editors, and journals from future reproach. Second, it provides the reader with potentially important information that may influence the interpretation of the data. In the future, authors should add a statement alerting the reader when data presented in one article overlap with data in a previous article, even if the degree of overlap is minimal or the data appear in different formats (e.g., table vs. graph).

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